

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 1549

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT GR

SUBJ: EX-POLITICO OPTIMISTIC ABOUT GREECE'S POLITICAL FUTURE

1. SUMMARY. STYLIANOS HOUTAS, EX-MINISTER AND FORMER DEPUTY, TOLD EMBOFF HE AND OTHER FORMER POLITICAL LEADERS ARE SANGUINE ABOUT JUNTA'S MOVING TOWARD POLITICAL GOVERNMENT. HOUTAS SAID POLITICIANS HAVE NOT CRITICIZED NOVEMBER 25 REGIME PUBLICLY OUT OF RESPECT FOR ITS LEADERS WHO HE DECLARED WILL FIND SOLUTION SOON. END SUMMARY.

2. FORMER MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND SOCIAL WELFARE AND EX-DEPUTY (CENTER UNION) FROM CENTRAL GREECE, STYLIANOS HOUTAS, WHO IS ONE OF PARTY'S STALWARTS WITH CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE, TOLD EMBOFF MARCH 11 THAT HE AND NUMBER OF HIS COLLEAGUES VIEW POSITIVELY OUTLOOK FOR CHANGE BY GOG WITHIN NEXT FEW MONTHS. HOUTAS REMARKED NOVEMBER 25 JUNTA BENEFITED FROM SILENT CONSENT GRACE PERIOD OF ABOUT ONE YEAR AT WHICH TIME GREEK PUBLIC WOULD LOOK FOR GOG STATEMENT OF INTENTIONS WITH SPECIFIC PLANS FOR POLITICAL NORMALIZATION. HOUTAS THOUGHT GOG ANNOUNCEMENTS MIGHT COME BEFOREHAND AND WOULD CONTAIN CONCRETE TIMETABLE. HOUTAS SAID JUNTA LEADERS ENGENDERED RESPECT AS HONEST, STRAIGHTFORWARD MILITARY MEN WHO IN TRADITION OF PRE-1967 MILITARY TAKEOVERS WOULD RETURN COUNTRY TO CIVILIAN RULE AFTER SHORT PERIOD HAD ELAPSED.

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3. IN RESPONSE TO QUERY ON RELATIVE SILENCE OF EX-POLITICOS, HOUTAS SAID HIS POLITICAL COLLEAGUES HAD REFRAINED FROM PUBLIC CRITICISM OF NOVEMBER 25 GOVERNMENT OUT OF COMMON SENSE SINCE THEY FELT JUNTA MOVING TOWARD PLAN FOR POLITICAL NORMALITY AND COMMENTS FROM OLD POLITICIANS WOULD BE DISRUPTIVE. EX-MINISTER HOUTAS ADDED THAT SURVEILLANCE AND TAILING OF FORMER POLITICAL LEADERS HAS BEEN LIGHTER SINCE NOVEMBER 25. HE POINTED OUT GOG HAS PUT OUT FEELERS TO YOUNG PROFESSIONAL GREEKS, SOME WITH LIMITED POLITICAL BACKGROUNDS, BUT THESE MEN APPARENTLY WERE NOT DISPOSED TO PARTICIPATE IN GOVERNMENT WITHOUT PUBLIC COMMITMENT BY REGIME TO REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. HOUTAS CONCLUDED CONVERSATION BY NOTING THAT UNLIKE THE DECEPTION OF PAPADOPOULOS AND MARKEZINIS WHO HE DESCRIBED AS OVERLY AMBITIOUS MEN, NEW JUNTA WOULD NOT ANNOUNCE POLITICAL NORMALIZATION AND THEN DELAY, SIDE-STEP OR PUT FORWARD ONLY POLITICAL CHARADE.

4. COMMENT: HOUTAS' SANGUINE OUTLOOK SEEMS SOMEWHAT SURPRISING BUT MAY BE EXPLAINED IN PART FROM HIS ASSOCIATION (HOUTAS WAS DEPUTY COMMANDER OF EDES) DURING GERMAN OCCUPATION WITH SOME KEY JUNTA LEADERS WHOM HE CONTINUES TO RESPECT. TASCA

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